

# THE BIBLE IN OUR MODERN WORLD

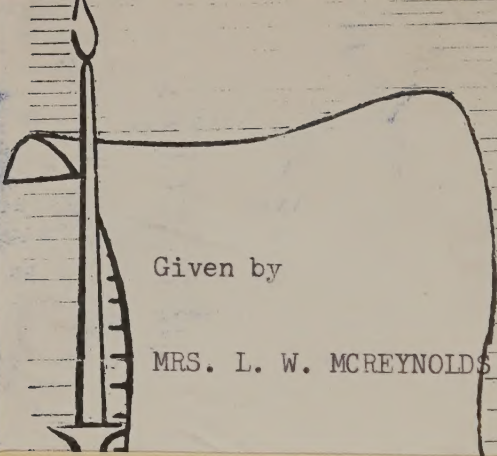
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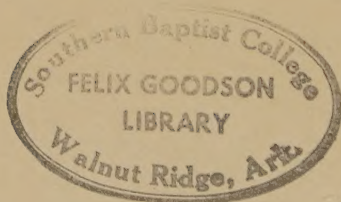
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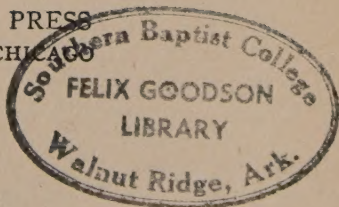


# THE BIBLE IN OUR MODERN WORLD

BY  
F. M. SHELDON



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Rev. George Owen  
Hyde Park, Mass.

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TO MY DAUGHTERS  
EVELYN AND HELEN

TWELVE AND THIRTEEN YEARS OF AGE, AND TO THE  
YOUTH OF OUR LAND, WITH THE HOPE THAT  
THEIR VIEW OF THE BIBLE AND RELIGION  
MAY BE VITAL AND ADEQUATE  
IN ALL THE ENLARGING  
EXPERIENCES OF  
THEIR LIVES



## FOREWORD

This little book attempts to show how the difficulties in Biblical and religious interpretation, incident to our greatly increased scientific and other knowledge, may so be met as to conserve all vital Christian truth, adjust our religion to present-day knowledge, and enable us so to teach the Bible to our youth as to save them the strain of violent readjustments in religious thinking and develop in them Christlike purpose and character. The book attempts to approach the subject helpfully and treat it constructively. It is intended to suggest a point of view and method for further study.

The substance of these chapters was first given to my church people in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and was then published through the kindness and generosity of the Men's Club.

They have now been thoroughly revised and considerable new material has been added, especially the major portion of the chapter on "The Question of Authority."

The writer has borrowed suggestions from two very helpful books: "God's Message to the Human Soul," by the late John Watson of England, and "The Use of the Scripture in Theology," by the late W. N. Clarke of Colgate. These and "The New Appreciation of the Bible," by Selleck, will be found specially helpful to those who wish to carry further this line of study.

F. M. S.



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## I. THE PROBLEM AND HOW TO APPROACH IT

*1 Thess. 5:21, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."*

The world in which we live is vastly different from that of our fathers. It is not that the world has changed, but that our information regarding it has increased. The horizons of human knowledge have been pushed back amazingly. This increase in knowledge has greatly modified our views of the world and of life.

In most spheres of activity account has been taken of this new information. Its meaning for certain portions of our lives has been thought out along constructive lines and our programs modified accordingly.

Among considerable groups of people the bearing of this new data upon the interpretation of our Bible and our religion has been duly considered, but the great majority of people have given scant attention to it.

We would not consider our youth fitted to meet the demands of present-day life if they were trained in schools which took no account of this new knowledge. Yet we permit many of our young people to go from the home and the church into the college or out into the world with little or no knowledge of the bearing of this new data upon the Bible and religion. When they discover that the interpretation of religion which has been

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given them takes no account of well known and easily available facts their faith may be subjected to serious strain. In that case they must either turn from the most fully attested and widely accepted facts or go through a painful process of readjusting their religious thinking. Some who have been taught that the Bible must be inerrant in all points or untrustworthy in any, that it all stands or falls together, are in danger of taking their former teachers at their word and throwing the Bible and religion over altogether, in case they find data incompatible with that view. Others, feeling that the facts tend to lessen the old type of authority and not having been shown the greater and truer authority, gradually become indifferent. Still others cling to the old interpretation of religion but keep it separate from all their other thinking and are likely to be in constant fear lest it be undermined.

Unless parents, Bible and religious teachers reinterpret the Bible and religion for the young sympathetically and helpfully in the light of present-day knowledge, they are in danger of getting these facts through people out of sympathy with religion, who use the data to destroy the old rather than to build something better.

Parents are in danger of misunderstanding their young people, of thinking that they are receiving dangerous teaching, and of trying to force upon them their own interpretations of the

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Bible and religion. Young people may misunderstand their parents, or find their interpretations inadequate, and think them behind the times. If we identify our particular interpretation of the Bible and religion with the Bible and religion themselves, the young may come to feel that since they can no longer accept the particular interpretation they must reject the Bible and religion also.

One reason many of our young people are not given an interpretation of religion in harmony with modern data is, that large numbers of parents and Sunday-school teachers, who no longer hold the former view of the Bible, have never been shown how to teach it constructively in the new way. Thus there is likely to be less Bible teaching in the home and the teaching in the Church School is too often from the old inadequate viewpoint.

This situation is also the cause of much misunderstanding and criticism between colleges and universities on the one hand and some parents and churches on the other. The schools must be true to the facts, which facts necessitate a reinterpretation of the Bible and religion. Thus parents and churches which identify the Bible and religion with their own interpretations of these are likely to think the schools irreligious and deliberately aiming to undermine religion. Parents and churches have not always appre-

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ciated the difficult task they create for the schools, and the schools have too often failed to appreciate the vital interests involved and so have not been as sympathetic, constructive and helpful as they ought. It is much easier to break down old interpretations than it is to build up new and better ones. Most of our effort should be given to the latter task.

If parents and churches continue to teach to their young views of the Bible and religion which take no account of what is common and fully accepted knowledge in the schools, they must not be surprised when their youth go through the most severe religious crises, if they become estranged from the former interpretations and possibly from religion itself. We should not subject our young people to this unnecessary strain and the church should give parents such definite assistance that they and the church may enable the young to avoid the danger. On the other hand leaders and teachers whose emphasis is primarily negative and destructive are subject to just criticism from all concerned.

Not only is this situation perilous to our youth and the cause of serious misunderstandings but those of us who should know the better way and be teaching it to the young are not making such use of our Bible as we should. Some people are gradually and of necessity being loosed from former positions; the old motives, sanctions and

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authorities are becoming less potent, and they have not yet arrived at the new position and found the more compelling motive. This makes it easy for them to drift away from positive religion. Some would still keep their Bible and religion from the test which the new data brings. Thus they have a kind of hothouse faith, unsuited to all kinds of outdoor weather. It dare not stand in the open of the intellectual arena, and cannot command the respect of thinking men.

Others, infatuated with the new and having scant sense of religious and life values, are in danger of using the modern data too largely to destroy the old rather than to construct something better. Some ministers take it for granted that their people know the new view and hence are not showing them how, definitely, to teach it to others. Some attempt to avoid the issue through silence, and use religious terms which mean one thing to the conservative and quite another to the person with more modern outlook. Such playing with truth stultifies the soul, destroys the prophetic spirit, leads to misunderstandings, and does nothing to solve a problem which sorely needs attention. Other ministers, feeling that they must be true to their light, speak out, but failing to show their people how they may conserve all that is vital, find some people unwilling to follow; or, expecting their people to move much more rapidly than they themselves

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moved, go so fast that the people cannot keep up. And then there are some people who would not keep up if they could. The present situation also makes it increasingly difficult for the minister to use his Bible discriminatingly, without being misunderstood; makes it difficult to secure a common Biblical background for teaching in the Church School, and leaves many parents without the necessary knowledge to make the Bible again a fully usable book in the home.

Such conditions should not continue. They call for careful, fearless, constructive handling. We must be honest and true to light; anything else is suicidal.

The most important factor in securing this new world knowledge is the scientific method. This method simply means that interpretations and conclusions should rest upon the actual facts, so far as these are obtainable. Many conclusions formerly held, not resting upon facts, were in danger of being overturned by this method. But ordinary human nature is not pleased to find that long-held and stoutly defended conclusions are indefensible. Thus we are likely to hold to the conclusions and oppose the method which reveals facts tending to undermine them. The result was that the appearance of this method stirred up a warfare of prejudice. The method was opposed in all realms of thought, but the opposition was naturally most severe in the field

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of religion. The battle has been long and fierce, frequently revealing more heat than light, but is now, happily, well-nigh over.

The method was right and is here to stay. It has so completely won its way as to be accepted today by all thoroughly open-minded seekers after truth. We understand now that there never was any real conflict between science and religion, that truth is a unity, and that what is true in one realm cannot be untrue in another.

By the use of this method, archeology, contemporaneous history and literature, textual and historical study, and comparative religions have supplied volumes of data bearing upon our Bible and its interpretation. All up-to-date colleges, universities, theological seminaries, and ministers are now acquainted with and take account of this data. The result is a greatly modified view of the Bible in these circles. This data has come to the churches much more slowly, thus leaving considerable room for misunderstanding between those who are most, and those who are least, acquainted with it and makes the situations indicated above.

But people say, "Cannot we be Christian and hold the old view?" Certainly. "Then," they reply, "why disturb them?" The answer is, that the facts, which wide-awake, thoughtful people constantly meet are the disturbing influence. It is our purpose to help those thus disturbed to



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realize that they may frankly accept all newly discovered truth and not have the vital elements of Christian faith disturbed at all thereby.

If you will pardon a personal word, permit me to say that I went to the seminary a literalist, believing every word in the Bible. That unwarranted view cost me many a sleepless night, and made the process of readjustment exceeding painful. But by letting some things wait, and keeping on with determination to find the way through, the new day came, with a better, more helpful Bible, and with a far more fundamental faith. Like many others, had the former view been, as some say, the only view there is, I must have become an unbeliever. But no one who fully knows the new, cares to or could go back to the old; for the new is better.

Two incidents from Mr. Moody's life may be helpful to some. The famous evangelist was a much bigger man than his own theology. Being at New Haven when George Adam Smith was delivering his lectures on Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament, he went to hear some of them. Mr. Smith was wholly modern in his viewpoint, but Mr. Moody nevertheless invited him to Northfield, presumably on the ground that the students who gathered there in conference must meet this modern data and Mr. Moody preferred that they get it from a constructive expert.



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After the great campaign in Scotland, Mr. Moody invited Mr. Drummond to Northfield. This was violently opposed by some who considered Mr. Drummond unorthodox. But Mr. Moody, knowing how remarkably Mr. Drummond had been used in preaching to students in Edinburgh, insisted that Drummond come, and brought him to Northfield, where he proved of great service to the students, in large measure because of his modern outlook. Thus did Mr. Moody stand for men with modern views, when convinced that they had a message.

But why do so many people oppose the open-minded, scientific study of the Bible? Remember that to be scientific one must take account of all the data. This means that we must take account of the spirit that is back of and in the Bible, otherwise we omit important data and our conclusions will be warped. Dr. Fisher of Yale was right when he said, "We cannot fully understand the apostles' theology until we possess more of their religious experience." Scientific study of moral and spiritual facts and values means sufficient moral and spiritual experience to give that sympathetic approach, apart from which the facts can neither be fully discerned nor adequately appreciated.

Is there opposition to the scientific method of Bible study because people do not want the truth? Surely that cannot be. There are four main

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reasons. First, religion has to do with the deepest and most precious interests of their lives. They feel that all the higher meanings and values are at stake. Some who have taught the new or been primarily concerned with destroying the old, have had no adequate conception of these sacred interests and so have failed to conserve them. Second, false views of the Bible and religion cause many to feel that the change of view destroys the Bible and religion. They have mistakenly bound up these most precious things with certain inadequate or false theories about them. Third, there is the constitutional opposition to change of any kind. Once established in a way of thinking, they dislike breaking up the foundations and battling their way to truer and more adequate conceptions. Fourth, and perhaps most serious of all, fear and opposition indicate a lack of faith in God, in truth, in humanity,—a kind of unbelief of a fundamental nature.

The following convictions would free people from fear that religion may be destroyed by changed views of the Bible, would lessen their opposition, and cause them to welcome all truth with reference to the Book. Careful thought makes it perfectly clear that religion made the Bible, and not the Bible religion, that religion was before theology or interpretations of religion, that inspiration was before any theory of

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inspiration, that "man is incurably religious," that people were saved before the Bible was written or before they knew about the Bible (Abraham and Cornelius being conspicuous examples), that salvation is not obedience to an inerrant, external rule, but the possession of a new inner spirit, a change of ruling purpose, an achievement of godlike character, moral fellowship with God, realized through seeing what God is as revealed in Jesus Christ, by turning from sin, and by giving our lives to him in trust and obedience. All parts of the Bible are not necessary to salvation and salvation is in no way dependent upon an infallible book. It is well to realize that all views of the Bible and of religion which are now held are but men's interpretations, made in the light of such truth as they possessed, and that we are in duty bound to reinterpret in the light of our larger truth. The past should be treated as a guide-post, not a hitching-post. Readjustment cannot be made in a moment; time is necessary, and it is well to remember that the Bible corrects itself if we but let it. In the light of these convictions, people may come to the Bible without fear and freely seek all possible light regarding it.

We have been unnecessarily frightened. The message and redemption of Christianity are not easily lost or destroyed. We could be Christians without the book of Genesis, the book of Numbers, without the entire Old Testament, yes, with

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only the gospel of Mark or of John. Our Christianity would be immeasurably impoverished, but we could know the essential spirit, message and character of God, as Christ revealed these, could turn from sin and come to God in trust and obedience. Think for a moment how many things, which have been considered as absolutely essential to Christianity and over which there has been hot controversy, are wholly left out if we had but one of these Gospels. And yet we could be Christians.

We have not been fair with this matchless Book. We came to it with a theory, which we did not get from the Bible, and then tried to crush the Book into the theory. It is the theory of inspiration. Is the Bible inspired? Is the Koran inspired? The Bible nowhere claims to be wholly inspired; the Koran does make this claim. How shall we tell? There is but one test; the height, the depth, the power, the adequacy of the spirit, the truth, the revelation found therein. To be wholly accurate, we should speak and think of men as inspired; we should not so speak of a book. The theory has been that God dictated what is in the Bible to passive men, who wrote it down. Think of trying to account for the Twenty-Third Psalm or the Epistle to Philemon by such a method. According to this theory everything in the Bible is literal fact; therefore

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the earth is only about six thousand years old; it is flat, and is the center of the universe. The Bible must be infallible in geology, astronomy, biology and history. As a matter of fact, inspiration has nothing to do with any of these. Inspiration is in the realm of religion, morals and character. Here is a man who, through years of clean living, spiritual growth and singleness of purpose, has developed a sensitiveness to the spiritual, the divine, and possesses a peculiar insight into things moral and religious; does he thereby know any more about geology, astronomy, biology or historical data? Not a particle.

The Bible is primarily a book of religion, a book of life, a story of redemption. It has history, literature, and reflects the science of its time, but the distinctive thing is its religious interpretation and use of all these. Not geology, even though Genesis has an account of creation, which was a common Semitic tradition, but the religious interpretation of creation; not literature, though it has all kinds and some of the best, for great literature has its source in that which produces great lives; not ethics, though its ethics are the loftiest known—religion is its theme; it has to do with God and man and the life which follows from right relations between them. It is a story of God's effort to redeem man by bringing him into fellowship with himself. This is primary; all else is secondary. This is the great-

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est religious and moral book of the world. Redemption and character are its supreme interests. It should be judged in the light of its purpose. We lay upon it a burden which it is not able to bear and which it was never intended to bear, when we try to make it authority in fields outside the scope of its purpose. Its lawmakers still legislate for the world in our day; its psalmists sing of every possible religious experience; its prophets were seers of the first rank, statesmen of the highest order, whose messages are vital in every generation; its Saviour is the supreme revelation of our Father; but the paramount interest of all these is religious.

In its essential message, this Book is of most vital importance to our day. The Roman gave us law, the Greek art, literature, philosophy; the Hebrew, the commanding religious geniuses of the world. Among them the God-consciousness rose to its highest point and they gave the world its universal religion. That religion we find in this Book, which is an exhaustless mine of religious and moral truth, concretely illustrated in the life and history of this people, whose one passion was to know God and walk in his ways. We need have no fear for this Book or for the religion it reveals, so long as we do not ask it to bear witness in spheres alien to its purpose, and so long as we judge the Book in the light of its own best standards.

## II. THE RESCUE OF ESSENTIAL CHRISTIANITY

*John 4:24. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth."*

If religion made the Bible instead of the Bible making religion, then the Bible is founded in the fact of religion, not religion in the fact of the Bible, much less in some particular theory about the Book. Religion rests in God and in the essentially religious nature of man, and the existence of these produced our Bible.

If Christianity is a new life, based on the one fundamental principle of love or good-will to God and man, if it is following Jesus Christ in the committal of our lives to God in trust and obedience, rather than conformity to external rules and laws, then it makes no difference whether or not our Bible is infallible, and we may come to it freely, seeking the whole truth about it.

If inspiration is in the realm of morals and has to do with spiritual things, then we should expect the Bible to reflect the geology, astronomy, biology, and accepted historical data of its time, and not feel that the Book is one whit less valuable religiously because it is not modern in these respects.



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We should keep in mind, also, the oriental and Hebrew point of view. The Hebrew thought of everything that came to pass as direct from God; there were no second causes. If men's hearts were hardened, God did it and aimed to do it. If man came to a conclusion about religion, about God, he would say, "God said unto me," or "the word of God came unto me." We shall not understand these people unless we keep this in mind.

Further, there is a difference between what is vital for us in religion and what belongs only to the history of religion. The Bible has what is permanent and vital today, but it also has much which had to do with the development of this religion toward these permanent elements, but which now belongs purely to the history of religion. Just as the Missouri Compromise and the Dred Scott Decision belong to the history of the anti-slavery movement, but are superseded by the amendment to the constitution, which abolished slavery, so, much that belongs to the development of this religion is superseded by the final product. The Missouri Compromise and the Dred Scott Decision are interesting as history but are superseded as legislative or judicial enactments.

Again, we may well remember that there is a difference between fact and truth. Just as a parable or fiction may teach the most profound truth, so, much in the Bible which may not be

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fact, may yet teach truth, as, for example, the Garden of Eden story. Also, much of our Old Testament was written hundreds of years after the events it is supposed to describe. The account of the sun standing still in the book of Joshua is a poetic statement taken from the book of Jashar. But this book of Jashar was not written, at the earliest, until after the death of Saul and Jonathan; for the account of their death in the first chapter of Second Samuel was also quoted from the book of Jashar. This is but one of many indications of recent date. Keeping these things in mind will help us to understand much that otherwise would be exceedingly difficult.

The view of the Bible which we are considering rescues essential Christianity. Christianity has a message to humanity, a great task to perform, a redemption to realize, a kingdom of God to establish. The task is so great and so well worth while that Christianity should be freed from all unnecessary incumbrances, stripped to what is vital and essential. We must set real Christianity free so she can do her work in the world.

Now the Bible is the story of Hebrew and early Christian Religion, with Jesus Christ and his revelation as the supreme achievement. We are accustomed to speak of Jesus Christ as the supreme revelation. Do we understand the significance of such a remark? Do we realize that

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by inference we say that what went before was not supreme? If we only get the full revelation in Jesus Christ, then what went before was only partial.

Jesus himself goes further and insists that the former was not only partial but, in some particulars, wrong. Turn to the Sermon on the Mount and hear him saying, "Ye have heard that it was said" thus and so, "but I say differently." And the things he repudiated and replaced were not from the ceremonial law, but from the law of Moses governing the relations between man and man. Jesus replaced the old standard with a new spirit and a new way of life. He criticized, selected from and repudiated some of his Bible, the Old Testament. He tells his hearers that some things which they thought God commanded, he did not command at all.

We find this same freedom of criticism within the Old Testament itself. The liberty Jesus took was taken by prophets before him. We have thought that God commanded the Old Testament sacrifices, and our theories of atonement have been largely influenced thereby. But did God command sacrifices? Read what some of the prophets say. "What unto me is the multitude of your sacrifices? saith Jehovah: I have had enough of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats." (Isaiah

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1:11.) Read the following verses and also chapter 66:1-6. "I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices." (Jeremiah 7:22.) "Wherewith shall I come before Jehovah, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves a year old? will Jehovah be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6:6-8.) "For I desire goodness, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings." (Hosea 6:6.) The fortieth Psalm and the sixth verse has this to say, "Sacrifice and offering thou hast no delight in; mine ears hast thou opened; Burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required." That is what some Old Testament writers thought of the sacrificial system. Possibly prophets had no objection to sacrifices, so long as they did not become a substitute for right living; but when they became such a substitute, as is always the tendency, then they were a curse. Keep in mind that this is what Jesus and the prophets say about certain Bible teachings.

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If Jesus' revelation was superior to what went before, and we want to be Christians, we must take our stand with Christ and judge all things in the Bible by what was universal and permanent in his teaching. And unconsciously we have all been doing just this to a certain extent, though not carrying it far enough. Take the Bible of any person who loves the Book and goes to it for comfort, inspiration, strength and guidance, and you will find that certain portions are worn, showing much use, while other portions are unworn, showing little use. None of us go to some books of the Bible very much. Our own need, our common sense tell us that portions of scripture have no value for us, so far as vital, present-day religion is concerned. We may go to these portions for the history of religion, or some may go to them just because they are in the Bible, but they do not feed us. All of us treat portions of both Old and New Testaments as if they were superseded and not binding. The theories we are developing are but the reasons for doing what all of us have been doing. Common sense and our own need make us all Biblical critics, though some of us do not recognize ourselves as such.

Taking our stand with Jesus, then, let us look further at our Bible. Here is Jesus saying, "God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth." And John says, "No man hath seen God at any time." Then the an-

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thropomorphic representations of God in the Old Testament must not be taken literally, but only as pictorial efforts to express the sense of his presence in concrete, tangible form. "God is a Spirit" and must be worshiped, not in this mountain alone, nor yet in Jerusalem, but anywhere and everywhere, so it be in spirit and in truth. Then the efforts to centralize all worship at Jerusalem, which were given as God's command, were contrary to Jesus' idea and teaching.

"God is love," and loves even enemies, and bids us love our enemies, if we would be his sons; then the hatred of enemies, so often approved in the Old Testament, was not taught of God, and we cannot think of God as sanctioning, to say nothing of commanding, the extermination of all the Canaanites. The imprecatory Psalms are the expression of human passion and not of God's will.

Contrary to the idea of separation expressed through the Holy of Holies in the temple, contrary to the whole pharisaic attitude, which held that God kept aloof from sinners, Jesus held that this God of love actually seeks sinners, that God's attitude does not need to be changed for God and man to come together in reconciliation, but that man's attitude is what needs to be changed. Therefore the entire idea of God's separateness, of sacrifices as appeasing God, or of Christ as being sacrificed to satisfy something

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in God, is unchristian. Jesus taught that God felt toward the sinful as he himself felt, and comes forth to "seek and to save that which was lost." Nowhere does he suggest that man must win God's favor or avert his wrath by propitiatory sacrifices. On the contrary, he made men know that God sought them out with all the yearning of a Father's love.

Jesus held, and so did Paul, that all moral law is fulfilled in one word, love. Love to God and man, actually living to secure their good, is the one guiding principle of the Christian life. Therefore all Bible teaching, its history, its parables, its laws, and all the experiences it records are valuable so far as they truly show how this love should act under varying circumstances. Jesus' whole life and teaching were just one marvelous illustration of this principle as it works out in life.

While Paul's *religion* was the religion of Jesus, inner, free, vital, comprehended in the one principle of love, there is considerable in Paul's teaching which is not vital today and belongs only to the history of religion. Some of his arguments, used with the Jews, and which started from their premise, in order that he might carry them with him, have little weight with us. His theology and his metaphysics were affected by his pharisaic antecedents and training, from which he could not wholly free himself. Some other portions of



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his teaching had to do with conditions and social customs which are now obsolete, making this part of the teaching of no value to us.

It should also be frankly recognized that Jesus, speaking in the language of his time, seemed to sanction some things, such as demonology, which we now interpret differently. It is also clear that our Gospels, as we now possess them, have considerable portions attempting to interpret Jesus' teaching and person. There is also some that is transient, belonging to the expectation and outlook of the time, as well as that which is permanent and universal.

Christianity has had to carry a great load of nonchristian material all these centuries. This has retarded her progress and offered her enemies points of attack. Infidels, like Ingersoll, attacked the lower conceptions of God and his commands as found, primarily, in the Old Testament, and for years the Church felt bound to defend these conceptions. Taking our stand with Jesus, and viewing the Bible in the truer way, that is no longer necessary. Instead of defending them, we very readily grant their inadequacy and, in cases, their incorrectness.

Revelation is progressive; there is a development from a lower to a higher plane. Thinking that the God of Jesus Christ was actually represented in all the words and deeds attributed to

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him throughout the Old Testament, came near making the Old Testament a millstone about the neck of Christianity. The reason European nations can do some things they are doing in the name of religion is because their God is the tribal God and the God of battles as indicated in some parts of the Old Testament, rather than the God whom Jesus revealed. Clarke well says, "We read in the Old Testament the history of religion. We find realistic pictures of ethical and religious life all along the way, and see how men thought of God from stage to stage of their advancing life. We are not required to think that he was rightly pictured on this page or that. We are required instead to exercise our moral judgment all the way."

This point of view makes the Bible much less difficult to interpret and teach, for it gives us an intelligent principle by which to guide our sense that some things are superseded, that the God whom Jesus revealed could not possibly sanction or command many things which are attributed to him.

It took more than fifteen hundred years of Hebrew life, during which the great passion of this people was to know God and do his will, to prepare the way and make possible the supreme revelation in Jesus Christ. In our Old Testament we have the story of that search for God, with

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some mistaken and inadequate ideas as to God's character and will for his people. But their search for God made it possible for him to speak to them, to work in and through them all along the way, and finally through them to give the world its best religion. By distinguishing the permanent gift of Christ from all else, the Christian gift will shine more brightly, work more powerfully, and the remainder will be judged more truly. Christianity will thus be rescued from a dangerous bondage and will be freed to build the Kingdom of God in the earth.

If this view of the Bible disturbs the faith of some, the reason is probably that their faith has been in the Bible rather than in God, who is the real object and foundation of faith. But some one replies, "What do we know of God except through the Bible?" Yes, and what do we know of chemistry except through the laboratory, or of the star except through the telescope? But the laboratory is not chemistry nor the telescope the star; they are the instruments through which we know chemistry and the star. Now the Bible is our instrument, our laboratory, our telescope, and God is what we seek. Do you not think it worth while to improve and fully understand our laboratory equipment and our telescope? The central thing is that we keep faith in God. And to keep faith in God in this modern world it is

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necessary to have the best and truest view of him which our instrument affords, rather than the more imperfect view of the dim past. This truest view is the one Jesus gives us. He gives us essential Christianity, rescued from hindering incumbrances.

### III. THE QUESTION OF AUTHORITY

*John 8: 32. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."*

By judging the Bible in the light of what is fundamental and permanent in the teaching of Jesus, there is discovered considerable that is provincial, temporary, and inadequate in the conception of God and of his will for man. This is specially true of portions of the Old Testament. There is much that belongs to the history of this growing religion, but has little significance for our day. The Bible itself furnishes the standards which compel this conclusion.

Viewing the Bible thus, the question naturally arises, What is left? If so much is superseded, does anything abide? and if so, what? The answer is very clear; everything is left. All that ever was vital and true and of value in really redeeming man abides. Truth is eternal. Views of the Bible cannot change it. We have made nothing untrue which ever was true; but our added light helps us better to see what was true and what was not true.

To those who fear that this view of the Bible destroys authority in general or the authority of the Bible in particular, we must reply that just

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the opposite is true; it places authority on a firmer foundation. It is just because we are unwilling to trust our lives to or be satisfied with anything short of the most complete authority that we insist on following Jesus in his rejection of the inadequate teaching found in some portions of the Old Testament. It is not less authority that we seek but more and truer. The meaning of religion for our lives is so significant, the interests at stake are so important, that we should be satisfied with nothing short of the best.

It is for such reasons as these that those who know the facts are unwilling to trust these sacred interests to teachings based upon a theory of the Bible not supported by the evidence. The simple facts make it impossible for any one who will face them to believe in the verbal infallibility of the Bible.

Lyman Abbott well says in his book, "My Four Anchors": "An infallible book would mean, first, that Jehovah communicated the truth to the writers and that the writers were able infallibly to understand it; next, that they were able infallibly to utter it; next, that their utterance was infallibly preserved through all the changes of the ages; next, that it was infallibly translated by infallible translators; and, finally, and hardest of all to understand, is that you and I infallibly comprehend it."

In the New Testament there are approximately

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one hundred references to the Old Testament which are not exact quotations. Matt. 27:9 quotes a prophecy from Zechariah as being from Jeremiah. The genealogies in Matthew and Luke do not agree. The inscription over the cross is different in each of the four Gospels. The Sermon on the Mount in Matthew and Luke is not the same. In the Old Testament the account of David buying the threshing floor from Araunah the Jebusite is different as given in 2 Sam. 24: 18-25, from the account in 1 Chron. 21: 18-27. The price paid in one place is fifty shekels of silver; in the other it is six hundred shekels of gold.

These are but samples of variations and discrepancies which simply put verbal infallibility out of the question.

Many of the Old Testament teachings and accounts were handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation. At last they were written down, often more than one man writing an account of the same things. In several cases two or three and sometimes more of these accounts were combined by some author. Except that these accounts often differed more widely, the result is much the same as it would be if an author attempted to combine our four Gospels into one account, which was actually done in Tatian's "Diatessaron." If you wish to study a good example of two interwoven accounts, read the story of the flood in the sixth and seventh



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chapters of Genesis. Note that in chapter 6: 19, 20, Noah is commanded to take two of every beast, bird and living thing into the Ark, while in chapter 7: 2, 3, he is commanded to take seven male and seven female of every clean beast, also seven each of the birds of the heavens.

But why should we wish an infallible book? Since we believe with Jesus that redemption is a matter of new inner life rather than obedience to an external rule, since not the letter of the law but its spirit is all-important, an infallible external letter, even if we had it, would be of little value.

But some one says, "If you reject one thing in the Bible as not authoritative, where will you draw the line and where stop?" The first answer is that we will keep all which according to the best light we can get and the truest spirit within us carries with it the note of conviction and appeals to us as true. The second answer is to ask the questioner where he is going to stop? Have you ever found a person who accepts and tries to live literally by all that is in the Bible?

For example, do you accept Paul's teaching that women should keep silence in the churches, that they should always keep the head covered? Do you wash one another's feet? Do you accept the Old Testament teaching that any who pick up sticks with which to build a fire on the Sabbath should be stoned? That according to cer-

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tain Psalms we should hate certain people with "perfect hatred"? If all the Bible is of equal authority, why do you not hold to the polygamy countenanced in the Old Testament instead of to the New Testament standard? Is it not a legitimate question, Where are you going to stop?

But you ask, "Who is to be the judge?" It is clear that each must judge for himself after seeking all possible help and light.

This raises the question as to the seat of authority, which is, after all, the crux of the whole problem. Is it in the Bible, the Church, in any external thing or is it within each individual? The immediate question is not what is authoritative but who is to determine and how we are to determine what has authority.

Suppose you went to people who had never heard of Jesus, the Bible, or the Church, and told them that they must accept the authority of one of these or of all three. Would you expect them to do so without asking any questions or searching for reasons why they should accept them as authority? If they did they would either be credulous or ignorant. If you expect them to accept your suggestions, you expect to give them reasons for so doing. But to what or to whom are your reasons to appeal? They must appeal to the judgment of each individual. Each must test them by such abilities for testing truth as he possesses. If your reasons for his accepting

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Jesus, the Bible or the Church appeal to his judgment sufficiently he will accept them. In short, our moral agency implies that we must use our powers to determine what we will permit to enter our lives and have authority over us. If we do not do that we are not moral beings at all.

Thus we find that the place where all authority for us is to be tested is within ourselves. If we say that we will let this or that person or the Church or any other agency decide our questions for us, then that simply means that the person or the institution make the appeal to us and because we judge them capable we give them the right to decide for us. If we did not have strong evidence, which appealed to us as adequate, we would be wholly unwarranted in trusting their judgment. The final test and responsibility and judgment are with ourselves. If we refuse to decide these questions for ourselves, we cannot escape the equally great responsibility of deciding to let some other person or persons or institution decide for us. We must pass upon the questions directly or indirectly.

Some think we should accept the consensus of opinion, the judgment of the majority, as our authority. Do you realize that such a view would have made Martin Luther and all Protestantism impossible?

Others think the Bible should be our final authority. I have already pointed out that the

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Bible must make its appeal to us and we must judge of its right to rule us. We must now take a further step and ask, Whose interpretation of the Bible should be authoritative? If you say the Church, then you must have tested the Church adequately and judged it as having full ability to decide for you. And again, what Church? If the Roman Catholic, then remember there would have been no Protestantism. If you say any other church, then, if it goes wrong, you have no remedy. If Jesus had accepted the authority of the Jewish Church, there would have been no Christianity.

If you say the interpretation of the Holy Spirit, it must be said that equally good men, who are equally sure they are led by the Spirit, come to very different conclusions. The fine thing about it is that they may thus differ and still both be equally Christian. No, we simply cannot escape the responsibility of making the decision for ourselves, either directly or by choosing whom or what is to decide for us.

Truth is our final authority and we must be the judges of what is true or of the abilities and adequacy of those who are to decide for us. In either case the final test of authority is within ourselves.

In deciding what or who is true, we should take account of all obtainable evidence, weighing it as best we may, seek the guidance of the Spirit

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of Truth and then make our decision, revising it from time to time as we get more light.

In matters religious and ethical Jesus may well be considered our final authority. His essential teaching has been proved in the lives of untold millions. He is the truth as to God's redemptive purpose, as to what is our right relation to God and the right attitude to fellow man.

Applied to the Bible this means that such portions as appeal to us as true, which grip our lives and help us, should be given place in our lives. This does not mean that only what we judge to be true is actually true. We may be mistaken; many things may be true and ought to be authoritative for us to which we have never responded. But it does mean that somewhere along the line we pass judgment and are responsible for deciding.

That we are responsible for our decision need cause us little concern if we earnestly desire the truth. The really important things are few in number, usually simple, and make their own direct and strong appeal. The two great commandments, the Golden Rule, faith in God as Father and in Jesus as Master and Saviour, and the kind of spirit and purpose Jesus wished us to possess, these are not difficult to discern.

Most of us have little opportunity to become expert Biblical students, acquainted with the detailed results of scholarship. Fortunately this is

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not at all necessary. What we need is to be simple, natural and honest in our approach and in the use of such material as we have time to consider. We are not called upon to explain all difficulties. The best of us must frankly say regarding many things, I do not know. In the light of Jesus' spirit and teaching it is not difficult to select the most important religious and moral teachings in the Old and New Testaments.

It would help us so much in this entire matter if we only realized that Christianity is primarily an experience rather than an explanation, a way of life rather than a theory about life. We have habitually said that "salvation is by faith," which is quite correct. But when some one substitutes for faith the word belief, meaning by this our theories about God and life, then it is all wrong. A man may believe everything about God and Christ and be a scoundrel. But faith that saves, though it must have enough conviction about God and Christ to come to them, must have as its primary factor that trust which means the actual committal of the life to God and Christ.

It may be illustrated as follows: suppose we come to the border of a beautiful lake and desire to get across. There is an old, rather dilapidated boat at hand. We hesitate to commit our lives to such a craft. The owner explains to us that it is safe and succeeds in fully convincing us. That is belief. But the boat cannot take us across

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unless we get in, unless we actually commit our lives to it. When we do that it shows trust or faith. So God can only save us when we commit our lives to him through Christ for forgiveness, new life and guidance.

When we thus think of Christianity as a commitment of life, as a way in which to live, it is easy to discover this way of life in our New Testament and we will be little disturbed by varying interpretations.

Therefore it need not concern us that there is much in the Bible which is provincial and temporary, if there is also that which is universal and eternal. And that is exactly the fact. There is that which is universal, eternal, ultimate in the Bible, as well as that which is provincial and temporary. Both elements are found in both Testaments. There is enough in the Old Testament that is eternally true about God and life to enable any who really wish to find the true God to do so. The two great commandments and the Golden Rule are in the Old Testament. But that true God is more adequately revealed and much more easily found in the New Testament.

Some may question whether essential Christianity is ultimate in its revelation of God's character and purpose and in its individual and social ideal. Without hesitation it may be said that for this life there is nothing above and beyond Jesus' revelation of the Father and his ideal for human-



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ity. His conception of God as Spirit, as love, as Father, as friend, as Saviour has nothing beyond it, whether we consider his teaching or the manifestation of his Father in his own work and life. He lifted religion out of all national, racial and ecclesiastical limitations and made it universal. When Dr. Barrows was puzzled as to what prayer he should use in opening the Parliament of Religions, a Hindoo suggested that the Lord's Prayer was universal in word and spirit.

This talk about going beyond Jesus' ideal for humanity is utterly without foundation. If there is anything beyond loving God with all one's powers and one's neighbor as himself, what is it, except it be this, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another even as I have loved you." If there is anything beyond being perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect, if anything can exalt the worth of human personality more than, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and forfeit his life?" if there is anything beyond the redemptive purpose and love of God as expressed in Jesus Christ, if there is anything beyond the determined purpose to have the will of God done on earth as it is in heaven, if you have heard of a higher social ideal than that of the kingdom of God on earth, in which righteousness, love, brotherhood and the will of God are to reign, many of us are most anxious to hear about it.

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Jesus did not tell us just how this or that should be done. Had he done so, much of his teaching would have been provincial and obsolete as soon as uttered. To the one who said, "Bid my brother that he divide the inheritance with me," he replied, "Who made me a judge or a divider over you? Take heed and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Instead of deciding disputes, he went back of them and sought to remove the cause. Had the brothers not been covetous there would have been no dispute about the inheritance. Jesus dealt with fundamental and universal principles; hence his essential teaching is as true today as it was when uttered. But for fear some may get the idea that Jesus was not definite and concrete, note that his entire life was given to illustrating how this principle of love operates under various circumstances. Jesus gave us ultimate religious teaching, and what is more, he realized this teaching in his own life. Jesus brings men into complete moral fellowship with God, throwing into their lives the mightiest redemptive force known to earth. Renan, who thought of Jesus only as a man, was compelled to say, "Whatever may be the surprises of the future, Jesus will never be surpassed."

Do people fear for the authority of the Bible? Some of it should not be authoritative. But this

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universal truth, this word of God contained within the Bible, has full authority. Nothing can destroy it and no theory of inspiration can increase it. The voice is that of our Father and "its authority is beyond the reach of criticism as the soul is beyond the reach of physical analysis." It is not dependent upon the accuracy of manuscripts. It finds us, as it has the right to find us, in our deepest depths and stands by its own self-evident truthfulness. Whatever we may think about the Christ, the best that we know of God, of man, and the way of life come from him. What he was God is; in him we have seen the Father.



#### IV. FINDING AND TEACHING THE POSITIVE VALUES

*Is. 40:8. "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand forever."*

This view of the Bible helps us to find its real message. When the lower may be judged and interpreted in the light of the higher, the Bible becomes the supreme book for the redemption and religious education of the race. It has a surpassing variety and wealth of material. There is history, legend, law, folklore, drama, tragedy, poetry, philosophy, proverb, sermon, epistle, parable and historical romance.

"This book has been unjustly attacked, and foolishly defended." To the outsider it may seem to lack unity. Instead of systematically discussing human nature and need, it plunges us into the sea of human existence. It is a book of life, where every human experience is portrayed, every type of humanity moves across the stage; it is not a museum where dead things are classified and in order. It is the most human of books, and for that reason most divine.

A paraphrase of two pages from John Watson's book, "God's Message to the Human Soul," will help to bring this out. "The reader is plunged into an ocean of human details": The

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love affairs of man and maid ; quarrels and reconciliations between brothers ; bargains in business ; feuds between rival tribes, with raids and captures ; the choice of kings and their anointing ; the evil doing of kings and their assassination ; the orations of statesmen as they warn and comfort their nation ; the adroit arrangements of ecclesiastics ; the collision of parties in the Christian Church ; radiant records of chivalrous deeds ; the black story of acts of treachery ; the romance of unselfish friendship and the blind enmity of religious bigotry ; the career of the successful man and the unmerited suffering of the martyr ; the devotion of mother to child, and the jealousy of women fighting for the same man's love ; the idyll of childhood, the strength of young manhood, the mellow wisdom of old age ; nomads of the desert, dwellers in the city ; prophets and sages, ploughmen and vinedressers, soldiers and traders, rich men and beggars, holy matrons and women who are sinners ; patriarchs with huge herds and apostles empty-handed, priests offering sacrifice and publicans collecting their gains—all these, and manifold more, appear in unarranged and natural procession. How artless and yet how fascinating ! The whole comedy and tragedy of life are here ; it is a more glorious Homer, and a more enticing Scott ; it is a larger and more vivid Shakespeare.

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But is this just an unarranged mass of material without a unifying thread? Not at all. There is reason for this entirely and unreservedly human portrayal. The story of the patriarchs is not recorded because they were successful stock farmers, but because they were pioneers in the quest of the soul for God. Joseph's victory over temptation and his attainment of splendid character, rather than his success, immortalize him. Moses' career was a romance, but his sterling points are his choice of the unseen above the seen and his identification of himself with the suffering people of God. The prophets were statesmen and forceful writers, but spiritual vision and fellowship with the eternal give them their permanent worth. The psalmists were poets of high rank, but they seized the heart of humanity because they sang the epic of the soul. "As you travel down Old Testament history you may find yourself in strange byways, but sooner or later you are brought face to face with God. Righteousness is what the writers demand and God is the one person they ever seek. There is upward progress; from the valley the path climbs the hillside until it reaches the finer air of the gospel uplands. The details of the book are only the body; the living soul of the book is religion, the fellowship of man with God." "One purpose governs and illuminates, invigorates and glorifies



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the Bible, and that purpose is spiritual. It is the supreme book of religion."

Would that we knew how to use and teach this Book! It is in the interest of larger, more intelligent use that these pages are written. A finer collection of pedagogical material for teaching religion and morals cannot be found. Here we see action, good and bad, bringing forth its logical results. There is some chaff, but there is far more wheat, and the wheat may become for us and for our children the very bread of life.

What are some of the vital and permanent values in these pages? What is left of the creation story, if it is not accurate geology? What is left? All is left; the priority and primacy of God. That is all that ever was there. "In the beginning God created." Since God is there guaranteeing meaning in creation, what need we care as to just how or when? "Let us make man in our own image." Man the offspring of God, by nature akin to God; that fact guarantees our high possibilities and eternal destiny.

The Garden of Eden story may be allegorical, but it is a true interpretation of the way in which temptation and sin attack the individual and the race. What matters it that we cannot find that particular garden, since every one can identify the experience in his own life, thus making all lands gardens of Eden?

Abraham, that forerunner of the Pilgrim

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Fathers, generous, courageous, faithful, righteous, seeking a new home under the call of God, stands out so majestically in the midst of his dim antiquity that he has deservedly become "the father of the faithful." Isaac and Rebekah are splendid examples of what divided counsel between parents will do in troubling a family. For genuine love and devotion, Jacob serving seven years for Rachel, which "seemed to him but a few days, for the love he had to her," is a beautiful illustration. Had we come upon the story of Joseph in booklet form for the first time, it would fascinate us by its plot, rivet our attention by its rapidity of action, and lift our ideals by its revelation of lofty character. To this day its moral message is undimmed. It is most valuable religious education material.

Where in history will you find more splendid unselfishness than in Moses, who left the side of Pharaoh to become the champion and leader of a horde of slaves? or truer mark of leadership than when he identifies himself with his rebellious people and asks God, in case he cannot save Israel, to blot him out with his own people? The Ten Commandments are as true and binding as they ever were. To be sure, a person who has the love of God in his heart does not need them, but that does not make it any less true that a man should not steal. The book of the covenant, the heart of the Mosaic legislation, has ideals of

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national cooperation and well-being, which put many of our own to shame. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" is but one of the many splendid teachings from the Holiness Code in the book of Leviticus. And "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy might" is found in the book of Deuteronomy. There is the transient here, but also the permanent; there is the provincial, but also the universal.

In all literature there is not a more beautiful pastoral than the story of Ruth who, leaving kindred and native land in her love for Naomi, insists, "Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried." Where will you find a choicer elegy than David's lament over the death of Saul and Jonathan, where he forgets Saul's attempts upon his own life, and sings, "Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided"? So long as friend shall value friendship, and unselfish comradeship shall be esteemed, the friendship between Jonathan and David will lift our souls toward the sublimest human relationships. So long as we immortalize deeds of valor in songs of praise, so long as youth shall aspire to patriotic and heroic en-

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deavor, the story of David and Goliath will thrill the hearts of our young.

The problem, why do the righteous suffer, has never received more dramatic treatment than in the book of Job. The Psalms cover every range of human life, express every type of religious sentiment, and reach from deepest sin and darkest human passion to divinest ideals and sublimest trust. For the fruit of righteousness read the first and fifteenth psalms; for confidence in God the great good Shepherd, adequate to every deepest human need, read the twenty-third; for God as the refuge and undergirding power of the soul, read the ninetieth and ninety-first; for thanksgiving the one hundredth; for God's all-searching omnipresence the one hundred thirty-ninth.

But the prophets are the superlative religious teachers of the Old Testament. Here we do not listen to pale-faced ascetics, hidden away from the world, not to men who permit religion to be separated from life, but to statesmen of the first rank, strong, virile men, standing in the midst of their nation's political, social, and religious life, daring to speak for God, to kings, princes, priests and people.

Isaiah scorns their religious ceremonies and sacrifices, demanding that they "seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." "What mean ye that ye

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crush my people, and grind the faces of the poor?" "Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no room, and ye be made to dwell alone in the midst of the land!" Here is a man with a social as well as an individual message. God's ideal is of a king, reigning in righteousness, princes ruling in justice, and of man as a hiding-place from the wind and a covert from the tempest. The second Isaiah, a prophet of the exile, is the spiritual guide of his captive people, sublime in his thought of God working his will among the nations, tender as the love of a mother, when he pictures God as feeding his flock like a shepherd, gathering the lambs in his arms, carrying them in his bosom and gently leading those that have their young. With penetrating vision, he sees that God's redemption cannot be wrought by the nation as a whole, nor even by a considerable remnant, but finally by the suffering servant, portrayed in the fifty-third chapter, and fulfilled in Jesus Christ. He calls his people to break every yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and finally sees the Spirit of God upon one who shall bring "good tidings to the poor, bind up the broken-hearted, proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound."

Amos, with God's indignant righteousness burning in his pure soul, turns from his sycamore trees, and calls those who have "sold the right-

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eous for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes," that crush the poor, that oppress the needy, that are at ease in Zion, that are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph—calls them to prepare to meet God, who will set a plumb-line in Israel; calls them to "hate the evil and love the good, and establish justice in the gate."

Hosea, prophet of God's tender and unfailing love, with an evangel winsome as the gospel, exposes his people's sin, sees them unfaithful as a wife who has become a harlot, yet woos them back from their degradation by telling them of God's care for them: "When Israel was a child, then I loved him. I taught Ephraim to walk; I took them on my arms; but they knew not that I healed them. I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love. How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I let thee go, Israel? My heart is turned within me, my compassions are kindled together; for I am God, and not man."

Jeremiah, prophet of the bleeding heart, burdened with his people's sin, yet sees the day when God shall write his law, no longer on tables of stone but in their hearts.

Micah, prophet of the poor, has a message which burns through his people's individual and social sin like a consuming fire. He cuts away their pretensions, rejects their burnt offerings, and brings them face to face with God, whose

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sole requirement is that they "do justly, love kindness and walk humbly with God."

The New Testament is inestimably rich in its view of God and man, and incomparable in the personality that irradiates it all. There is some alloy even here, but there is pure gold in abundance. The Sermon on the Mount stands alone in the religious and moral world. The parables of our Lord are unequaled as instruments for religious teaching. Epistles expand, interpret, and adjust the Christian message to the need of growing churches. And the writer of most of them has found the answer to Job's question, why do the righteous suffer, in that power through which we can make all things work together for good. In this New Testament we find essential Christianity, "not Christianity as a deposit of truth, but as seed for the bearing of more and more abundant harvests."

The mask was never torn from the face of sin with more unerring accuracy, and the veil was never so completely lifted from the face of the God whose supreme purpose is to bear away the sin of the world, at whatever cost. The skilful surgeon's knife is applied to cut away the last vestige of cancerous sin, and the healing love of God is oil and wine to wounded and bleeding lives. The clouds are recognized, but these clouds are shot through with rays of light and drenched with golden glory. There are lives broken by sin,



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but this evangel causes the "note of joy to break even from the bruised reed." The greatest thing here is not the ultimate moral ideal, it is the personality which lifts us up to realize the ideal. Through it all and back of it all, there is a life which in its daily walk, even more than in its teaching, reveals the character and redemptive purpose of God as we have never seen them before or since. In him, we see what God is, what God means, and what is God's purpose of love toward man. Jesus Christ is the master of life, and the master of death. He holds the secret of the ages. Into our lives, while we live, he throws the dynamic of God's sacrificial love; and when the shadows lengthen, when our sun of life is setting, he lifts the rainbow of immortal hope before our eyes, to cheer us on the lonely pilgrimage.

If you ask how this race developed such religious genius as to give the world its universal religion, it may be said that they did it in the most natural manner; for inspiration and revelation are subject to the laws of daily life. God early led them to the conviction that religion is fundamental to adequate living. Therefore they made it their vocation to find God; they hungered and thirsted for him; they talked of him as they lay down at night, when they rose up in the morning, as they gathered for the breaking of bread and as they journeyed by the way. They



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developed spiritual insight and sensitiveness, making it possible for God to impart ; they opened the windows of their souls toward God, and the Father, who above all things seeks just such opportunity, let in the light. The process is no different today. God still waits for us to develop the soul life that can hear, the spiritual insight that can see. This takes generations and can only come through the cooperation of the family. When we cease teaching religion to our children, when we cease making it a matter of supreme family concern, when we substitute for the Lord's Day, with its church life, its high religious thought and holy aspiration, the week end, with its emphasis upon pleasure, visiting and sight-seeing, the lamp of religion will begin to grow dim ; there will be no certain hearing of the voice of God ; we will develop no Beecher or Brooks ; for we have turned from the fountain of living waters to broken cisterns which can hold no water ; we have forsaken the springs from which alone cometh the water of life.

This modern Bible, with certain portions exalted above other portions, because of their supreme worth, is no longer, as Curtis tells us, a "mechanical record of doctrines and forced divine manifestations ; it is a book of genuine, historic life, an epic of salvation, showing the living process of God's revelation through Israel." And the most fundamentally important thing in life

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is to know the secret of this book, the secret of Him who, in Palestine, lifted religion out of all national, racial, and sectarian limitations, and made it such oneness of life with our God and Father that we treat our fellow men here and now as God treats them.









